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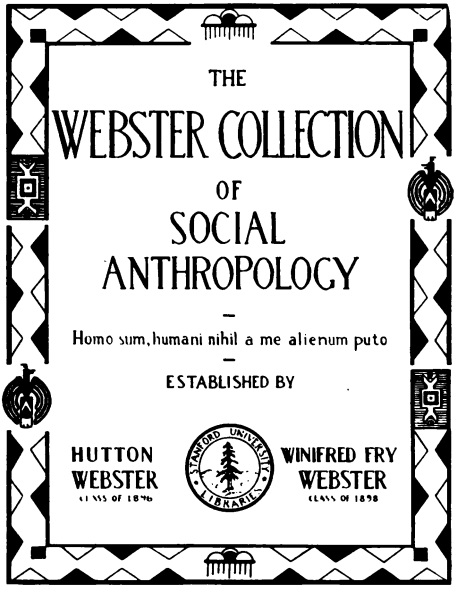
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THE ANCIENT EAST

No. II.

THE TELL EL AMARNA PERIOD

BY

CARL NIEBUHR

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THE TELL EL AMARNA PERIOD

THE RELATIONS OF EGYPT AND WESTERN ASIA IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY B.C. ACCORDING TO THE TELL EL AMARNA TABLETS

By CARL NIEBUHR, pseud.

TRANSLATED BY J. HUTCHISON

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THE TELL EL AMARNA PERIOD

I. The Tablets, and How they were Found.

As early as 1820 it was known in Europe that in Middle Egypt, on the east bank of the Nile, in the district between Minieh and Siut, there lay the remains of a great city of Ancient Egypt. The Prussian exploration expedition of 1842–45 gave special attention to this site, where indeed were found, about sixty miles south of Minieh, extensive ruins, beginning at the village of Haggi Kandil and covering the floor of a rock-bound valley named after the fellahîn village, El Amarna. At that time the ground-plan of the city was still easy to distinguish; the regular lines of the streets could be traced, and enough could be seen of the great design of the principal temple to excite the admiration of the discoverers. This example of the layingout of an ancient Egyptian town still remains almost unique, for of old, as now, private buildings were constructed of flimsy material. That the

Tell el Amarna remains have escaped rapid destruction is due entirely to the sudden and violent downfall of the original splendour of the city and the complete desolation which succeeded. The importance of the place was revealed on examination of the surrounding cliffs. Here were found, sculptured and inscribed in a new and peculiar style, the rock-cut tombs of the most distinguished inhabitants of Akhet-haten, the royal city built for himself about 1380 B.C. by Amenophis IV., and destroyed soon after his early death.

In the beginning of 1888 some fellahîn digging for marl not far from the ruins came upon a number of crumbling wooden chests, filled with clay tablets closely covered on both sides with writing. The dusky fellows must have been not a little delighted at finding themselves owners of hundreds of these marketable antiquities, for which a European purchaser would doubtless give plenty of good gold coins. To multiply their gains they broke up the largest tablets into three or four separate pieces, often to the grievous hindrance of the future decipherer. But very soon the matter was bruited abroad; the Government at once intervened, almost all the find was in due time secured, and a stop was put to any further dispersal of separate tablets and of fragments. The political situation in Egypt is pretty accurately indicated by the fact that about eighty of

the best preserved of the Tell el Amarna tablets at once found their way to the British Museum. Some sixty were left in the museum at Boulak, and about one hundred and eighty were secured for the Berlin Museum, many of them tiny fragments, but mostly containing important records. Few have remained in private hands.

Some alabaster slabs came to light at Tell el Amarna bearing the hieroglyphic names of King Amenophis IV. and his father, Amenophis III. These had evidently served as lids to the chests. Some tablets also were inscribed with notes in hieratic, written in red ink. But in spite of these exceptions, it was at once recognised that all the documents were written in Babylonian cuneiform. The reading of the introductory lines on various tablets served to show that the find consisted of part of the Egyptian state archives in the times of the two kings Amenophis III. and IV. Thus the first of the many startling discoveries that were to follow in such rapid succession was made in the recognition that about 1400 B.C. the Semitic speech of Babylon served as the language of diplomacy in the East.

Apart from a few tablets dealing with mythological subjects and written in Babylonian, and two which contain inventories, all the tablets were letters. Most of them were from Egyptian officials in Syria and Canaan, and usually they were

addressed to the king. Among them were found many long letters from Asiatic kings to the Egyptian monarch, and also a few communications from the Foreign Office of "Pharaoh" himself. We must note, however, that this title of Egyptian kings, so commonly used in the Old Testament, is apparently never once employed in the Tell el Amarna documents. It is interesting to observe how difficulties of the script and of a language not entirely familiar to most of the scribes were overcome. Even the learned scribes of the royal "House of the Sun" in Egypt had obviously their own troubles in the matter, and made use of the Babylonian mythological texts already mentioned as a means of improving their fluency. Of this we have evidence in the thin red lines by which, on these tablets alone, the words have been separated from each other. The governors and officials must not be classified as educated or uneducated on the evidence of their letters; all alike employed professional scribes, of whom one might be skilful and the next a bungler whose communications must be guessed at rather than read. Occasionally a Babylonian word is followed by the corresponding Canaanite word, also in cuneiform, but marked as a translation. Like the Egyptian kings, so the Asiatic sovereigns had each his staff of scribes. One of the petty chiefs, Tarkhundarash of Arsapi, was

evidently so unhappy as to have none in his Court who could read or write a letter in Babylonian, for letters to him were written in his own tongue. The scribe of the Hittite king produced only a species of dog Latin, while the scribe of the king of Alashia trots out his whole vocabulary unhampered by grammar. On the other hand, the letters of the king of Mitani are drawn up in the characters known as Assyrian; and it is probable that the Assyrian system of cuneiform may have originated in Mitani. If so, for the Mitani scribe there could be no question of any special difficulty in using the acknowledged language of diplomacy in the Ancient East.

It is evident that the Babylonian royal scribes at length showed some consideration for their unfortunate Egyptian correspondents by writing as a rule in phonograms which could be easily spelt out, since strange ideograms might have brought the reader to a standstill. The sources of the letters may be distinguished also by the colour and consistency of the material of the tablets, which are of all shades of clay, from pale yellow to red or dark brown. Side by side, too, with hard and legible pieces, lie broken and crumbling fragments which have suffered sadly during the few years that have elapsed since they were again exposed to the air.

II. The Egyptian Court and Administration.

The two Pharaohs of the Tell el Amarna Period belong to the XVIIIth Dynasty, which about 1560 B.C. had freed the land from the yoke of certain Asiatic invaders known as the Shasu. The new dynasty soon began to encroach upon Asia. King Thutmosis III. (1503 to 1449 B.C.) after many chequered campaigns conquered Syria as far as the Gulf of Iskanderun. On the African side he extended the bounds of his kingdom to the confluence of the Nile and the Atbara, so that the greater part of Nubia owned his sway. The terror of his name did not die with him, but for long did good service to his successors, the first of whom, Amenophis II., seems moreover himself to have maintained energetically the fame of Egyptian arms. To this influence our clay tablets bear witness by twice making emphatic reference to the days of the powerful "Manakhbiria"—the prenomen of King Thutmosis III. With the accession of Amenophis III. the warlike spirit ceased to prevail at the Court of Thebes. Nothing more was to be gained by Egypt in Western Asia, and the tastes of the new king lay in other directions than war. The two celebrated Colossi of Memnon (statues of himself), many great buildings, the important part played by his favourite wife Teye, the well-filled harem, the cultivation of "wisdom"

(which practically, no doubt, was tantamount to what we should call "preciosity"); last, but not least, the solemn adoration of his own divine image —all these facts combine to indicate the altered condition of things which came about under Amenophis III. He reigned thirty-six years, long enough to allow the movement introduced by him to run its course. His son, Amenophis IV., was, however, just as little inclined as his father to walk in the steps of his warlike ancestors. Hampered apparently by bodily defects, this Son of the Sun tried his strength in a field often far more dangerous than the battlefield. He began a reform of the Egyptian religion, apparently in the direction of a kind of monotheism in which the chief worship was reserved for the disk of the sun, the symbol under which the god Ra was adored at Heliopolis in the Delta.

Nothing being known of the life of this king as heir-apparent, probably we shall never understand what led him to take this new departure. From his conduct during the early years of his reign it may be concluded that he intended to proceed gradually, but was roused to more aggressive measures by the resistance of the powerful priests of Amon in Thebes. These men acted, of course, for their own interests in promptly resisting even mild attempts at reform. Perhaps also the king's aim had been from the outset to

weaken the influence of the Theban hierarchy by new doctrines and to strengthen the royal power by steady secularisation. Open strife between the adherents of Amon and those of the Sun's Disk, the "Aten," broke out in the second or third year of Amenophis IV., that is, about 1380 B.C. The immediate removal of the Court from Thebes to Tell el Amarna points to a failure of the royal efforts, for the command to build the new city had not long been issued, and the place was still altogether unfinished. The official world promptly broke with the old religion. The king altered his throne-name, "Amen-hetep," to "Akhen-Aten," "The glory of the Sun's Disk"; His young daughters received names compounded with "Aten," whilst the courtiers found it advisable to strike out "Amen," if this chanced to form part of their own names, and to substitute for it "Ra," as having more or less the same significance as "Aten." "The doctrine," as the new dogmas were called in inscriptions at Tell el Amarna, was regarded as so entirely a matter of home politics in Egypt, that the officials of Syria and Palestine—all foreigners—do not seem to have received any formal information regarding it. Most of them continue to refer to Amon in perfect innocence, and only a few who were better informed began rather later to take the change into account. Thus Yitia of Ashkelon.

Pu-Adda of Wurza, and a certain Addudaian correct the name of the Egyptian commissioner "Amanappa" into "Rianappa." Abimilki of Tyre apparently even tried to give himself out as one initiated into "the doctrine," and to represent his city as a servant of Aten. If this were the case he must have received a severe rebuff, for after his one attempt he falls back into the old style. Neither the royal nor the national pride of Egypt would suffer any such familiarities.

The new capital received the significant name of "Akhet-Aten" ("Horizon of the Sun") and was solemnly consecrated long before it was half finished. The widow of Amenophis III., the queen-mother Teye, came occasionally to visit the new capital, and was received with all honour; evidently she had paid timely respect to her son's opinions. How far the Aten dogma represented real progress in religious thought can be gathered only from the contents of a few hymns remaining on the walls of some of the tombs. In these the expression of devout feeling seems to have become richer and more spontaneous, and the monotheistic tendency is evident. This characteristic, however, may often be observed by a sympathetic reader in the hymns to Amon, and even to less important deities: the deity adopted as a special object of worship by any individual is always favourably represented by him. The Aten dogma,

being based on natural phenomena and not on mythology, was, of course, heretical.

Those of his officials who had accepted "the doctrine" were regarded by Akhenaten as deserving men, and on this ground alone, Ai, called Haya in the Amarna letters, received golden honours to the full. This Haya, who was entitled "beloved royal scribe," was probably a secretary of state, and was once sent as a special ambassador to Babylonia. Dudu occupied another important post; Amanappa, who has already been mentioned, seems from a letter written by him to Rib-Addi of Gebal, to have been a commander-in-chief. Hani, Salma, Paura, Pahamnata, Hatib Maya, Shuta, Hamashni, and Zitana all appear as the bearers of royal commissions in Syrian territory. An official named Shakhshi receives instruction as to the conducting of a royal caravan. But to the Asiatic vassals the most important office of all was the governorship of Lower Egypt, the country called "Yarimuta," an office filled at this time by Yanhamu. The letters afford abundant evidence that any vassal who had incurred Yanhamu's enmity must walk warily. The minister of the king of Alashia, though his equal in rank, sent gifts to this dangerous man, who had harassed merchants of Alashia by demanding from them illegal dues. Rib-Addi of Gebal lost land and throne, in spite of the counten-

ance of Amanappa, because such was Yanhamu's pleasure; and of Milki-El of Gath he made a severe example, to which we shall refer later.

On the whole, the Asiatic provinces enjoyed self-government under the supremacy of Egypt, and the disadvantages of this condition of things are revealed in numerous letters. These end almost invariably with a request to the king to come in person to the aid of his distressed vassals, or at least to send troops. Sometimes this was done, but usually such expeditions seem to have been undertaken with inadequate forces and seldom resulted in permanent peace. The native princes, chiefs, and village headmen were perpetually struggling with each other. They made alliances among themselves, or they entered into secret treaties with neighbouring states and afterwards brazenly denied them. This wretched state of affairs may be traced to two principal causes—the tribute question and the immigration of Bedawîn tribes.

The king was not to be trifled with when tribute was overdue. The most valid excuses—loss of territory, war, failure of the harvest—were received with a suspicion doubtless justified in general but which must have caused much hardship in individual cases. The ordinary tribute was fixed, as well as the regular subsidy for royal troops and the force which had to be raised

in emergencies. But the gifts—such as female slaves—which must needs be sent not only to the courtiers but even to the king himself, added enormously to the burden, so much so that to the poorer chiefs a summons from Egypt to appear in person meant little less than ruin. Resistance to it was so surely to be counted on that such a summons was often kept in the background more as a threat than anything else. Now and then petty chiefs in Palestine and Syria withheld their bushels of corn, their three oxen or their twenty sheep; or perhaps they were so sparing of bakshîsh that the tribute itself was swallowed up and vanished entirely from the accounts. It was scarcely possible to take costly measures to punish such delinquents, so the business was turned over to some kind neighbour of the recalcitrant chief, and a little war was soon fairly ablaze. But when direct commands of royal ambassadors were treated as of doubtful authenticity, it was hardly likely that the authority placed in the hands of an equal would meet with much respect. Both leaders received reinforcements; a third intervened at a moment favourable to himself; many and often very remote quarrels broke out, and when at length the royal commissioners hurried upon the scene it was hard for them to say whether or not the original sentence had been executed. Cer-

tainly most of the property of the original offenders had been largely lost or destroyed, but the plunder had crumbled away in passing through countless hands, and the royal official might seek it from Dan to Beersheba, or farther, but in vain. Out of the first difficulty a dozen others had arisen, till the suzerain seized upon his dues by force, yet without leaving peace behind him. The tablets are full of references to these complicated struggles, which it is not always possible to follow in detail.

Additional confusion was caused by the immigration of Bedawîn tribes. In the north the nomadic Sutu, in the south the Habiri pressed forward and encroached upon Egyptian territory. It is evident that this further pressure was calculated to bring matters to a crisis, for, like the tribute, it affected pre-eminently the vassal chiefs and tribes. We find the Habiri especially in the very act of ruining some of these petty princes, others of whom preferred to make treaties with their unwelcome guests, though this indeed was apparently in secret only. But the Sutu reached the domains of more powerful vassals, and by two of these, Aziru and Namjauza, were openly taken into pay. Obviously such alliances with land-seeking plunderers could only prolong and embitter the strife. In Palestine, no doubt, peace as regards Egypt would soon have

been restored had not the Habiri proceeded to seize certain strongholds, which they used as centres for further expeditions, thus involving the settled inhabitants in wider quarrels. What with the help of the Bedawîn, and the universal unrest any ambitious vassal of Egypt must at length have seen a tempting prospect of establishing an independent kingdom, if only he could deceive the Egyptian Government long enough as to his intentions, and delay or thwart any measures that might be taken against him.

Certainly the government of Pharaoh did not lack for watchfulness and was well, if not too well, served in the matter of information. But in the face of perpetual complaints and counter-complaints, entreaties for help and what were for the most part incredible assurances of everlasting fidelity, there was no course for the king and his councillors to take but either to order a military expedition on a large scale, or to turn a sceptical ear to all alike and confine their attention simply to the tribute. Pride and weakness combined led them to take the dangerous middle course and send inadequate bodies of men singly into the disturbed districts. A certain amount of success attended the policy; the king's Nubian "Pidati" were dreaded from of old, and his mercenaries, the Shirtani, were looked upon as invincible. When it was a mere question of hundreds in the field

against hundreds, the appearance of a company, or of a few troops, restored peace for a time, but serious and aggravated hostilities between masses of rebels could not always be checked by such small numbers, and it was a severe blow to the prestige of the Shirtani when they were defeated at Gebal by the Sutu.

The knowledge that Egypt was far away, and that the Son of the Sun was highly exalted, led the chiefs and officials in Syria and Canaan to deeds of open defiance of their suzerain. Ambassadors from foreign states were robbed in passing on their journey to Egypt, caravans were plundered, and gifts sent to Pharaoh were intercepted. All this notwithstanding, still the stream of rhetorical devotion flowed on in the letters.

III. Letters from Asiatic Kings.

Akhenaten had taken with him to the new capital part of the archives of his father. With few exceptions, it is not from the letters of vassals that we learn this, for these, as a rule, are addressed simply "To the King." The foreign sovereigns, however, almost always addressed the Pharaoh by his prenomen. Thus neither "Amenhetep" nor "Akhenaten" appears in the Tell el Amarna letters, but always "Nimmuria" (*i.e.*, Neb-

maat-Ra) for Amenophis III. and "Napkhuria" (*i.e.*, Nefer-khepru-Ra) for Akhenaten. Dating there was none in correspondence of that time and hence these addresses are of great chronological importance.

Four communications to "Nimmuria" from the Babylonian ruler Kadashman-Bel (at first incorrectly read Kallima-Sin) are among the most important in this respect. The writer calls his land Karduniash, a name for Babylonia used by the Assyrians after the native employment of it had long ceased. Kadashman-Bel himself belonged to the house of the Kassite chiefs, who, about two hundred and fifty years previously, had invaded and conquered Babylonia, but who afterwards fully adopted Babylonian manners and customs. It is at once apparent that Nimmuria and Kadashman-Bel approach each other as equals. The Egyptian, however, was supposed to possess one very precious thing in superfluity, namely, gold; for at that time the gold mines of Nubia were in good working. The Babylonian letters, therefore, seldom failed to contain a hint that the king desired some of the precious metal, sometimes as a return gift for rich presents he had given the Egyptian, sometimes as temple-offerings, or as a dowry. Matrimonial alliances were the principal means by which a ruler kept on good terms with neighbouring princes, and Oriental

polygamy allowed a great deal to be done in that line. It is noticeable that the claim made by the Egyptian king to divine honours soon began to cause little difficulties in diplomatic intercourse. Not that "the Son of the Sun" claimed adoration from his royal compeers: that was expected from his subjects only. But he showed the greatest reluctance to give away a daughter to any foreign king. Moreover, the fact must not be overlooked that it was precisely in the XVIIIth Dynasty that brothers and sisters of the royal house so frequently intermarried, a custom afterwards affected by the Ptolemies and implying simply that the royal race of the Pharaohs being emphatically divine was therefore essentially exalted above the world in general. According to this flattering fiction there could be no equal union for a king of Egypt except with his own sister. No such marriage seems to have been made by Nimmuria, but, as if in amends for that, he worshipped, as above stated, his own divine image. We need not wonder, then, that he regarded his children as divine manifestations and hesitated to bestow them in marriage.

Kadashman-Bel seems to have thoroughly appreciated this little weakness, and no doubt the mortal gods on the Nile were a subject for mockery at the Courts of Western Asia, even in those days. Thus, a remark of Nimmuria's to

the effect that no princess had ever been given away from Egypt is answered with delightful dryness:

"Why so? A king art thou, and canst do according to thy will. If thou give her, who shall say anything against it? I wrote before, 'Send, at least, a beautiful woman.' Who is there to say that she is not a king's daughter? If thou wilt not do this, thou hast no regard for our brotherhood and friendship."

Kadashman-Bel threatened that he in his turn would hesitate to give his daughter in marriage, and would make similar evasive excuses. At last, however, the negotiations came to the desired conclusion, and for a time gifts flowed more freely on both sides.

Valuable, though in many respects puzzling, is a large tablet containing a letter of Nimmuria to Kadashman-Bel. Possibly it may have been kept as a copy, and in that case it must belong to the early part of the correspondence. More probably however, the letter is an original which came back "undelivered" to Egypt, the addressee having died in the meantime. Kadashman-Bel had complained that his sister, who had been given by his father in marriage to the Egyptian, had subsequently never once been seen by any Babylonian ambassadors. Certainly a woman in royal garb had been pointed out, but not one of them had

recognised her as their own princess. "Who knows that it was not some beggar's daughter, a Gagaian, or a maiden of Hanirabbat or Ugarit whom my messengers saw?" Then Nimmuria took up the tale, and complained that Kadashman-Bel sent only ambassadors who had never frequented his father's Court, and were moreover of adverse bias. "Send a *kamiru*" (evidently a eunuch is meant) "who knows thy sister." Further misunderstandings come under discussion, from which it is evident that the general situation between the two princes was very much strained.

King Tushratta of Mitani was a phenomenon in his way. In Egyptian inscriptions his kingdom is called Naharina—*i.e.*, "Mesopotamia." One of his tablets bears the following official memorandum, written in red ink and in hieratic:

"[Received] in the two-[and-thirtieth year of the reign of Nimmuria], in the first winter month, on the tenth day, the Court being at the southern residence (Thebes), in the Residence Ka-em-Ekhut. Duplicate of the Naharina letter brought by the messenger Pirizzi and (another)."

Tushratta's dominion was wide, extending from south-eastern Cappadocia to beyond the later Assyrian capital, Nineveh. But the kingdom of Mitani, occasionally called after the northern fatherland of its people, Hanirabbat, was nearing its fall. In the south it had a dangerous enemy

in Babylonia; in the north and west the Hittites were hostile and all the more to be dreaded since Mitani-Hanirabbat was inhabited by a people related to the Hittite stock. The kings of Mitani soon realised that their existence was best secured by a steady alliance with Egypt. To this end Artatama and Shutarna, the two predecessors of Tushratta, had sent their daughters to the harem of the Pharaohs. The so-called "marriage scarab" of Nimmuria bears witness to this, and reference to the bond is often made by Tushratta. Before he could ascend the throne he had various difficulties to contend against, of which a faithful account is sent to Egypt:

"When I ascended my father's throne I was still young, for Pirhi did evil to my land and had slain its lord. Therefore he did evil to me also and to all my friends. But I quailed not before the crimes that were committed in my land, but slew the murderers of Artashumara my brother, with all their adherents. Know also, oh, my royal brother! that the whole army of the Hittites marched against my land. But the God Teshup, the lord, delivered them into my hand and I destroyed them. Not one man from their midst returned to his own land. And now I have sent to thee a chariot and two horses, a youth and a maiden, the booty of the land of the Hittites."

This letter betrays itself as one of the earliest written for Tushratta by the fact that it makes no request for gold. All his later letters are filled

with greedy entreaties, completely giving the lie to the immediate pretext under which they were professedly written. One of them, more than a yard long and proportionately broad, still keeps its charms to itself, since for some unknown reason, though written in cuneiform character like the rest, the language is that of Hanirabbat and this we are still unable to read. Nimmuria indeed, seems to have had a weakness for this worthy brother-in-law and his ingenuous manner of approaching him, and spared neither presents nor promises; at his death, however, some of the latter remained unfulfilled. Evidently neighbouring kings heard at length of Tushratta's financial success and were naturally envious. An extract will give the reader a more definite notion of this royal correspondence with its stylisms and turns of thought. The following is taken from Letter VIII. in the British Museum edition. The long-winded introduction was already a fixed convention, and occurs in all the letters from whatever country, but the declaration of affection is peculiar to Tushratta:

"To Nimmuria, the great king, the king of Egypt, my brother, my brother-in-law; who loves me and whom I love: Tushratta, the great king, thy (future) father-in-law, king of Mitani; who loves thee and is thy brother. It is well with me; may it be well with thee, with thy house, with my sister and thy

other wives, with thy sons, thy chariots, thy horses, thy nobles, thy land, and all that is thine, may it be well with them indeed! Whereas thy fathers in their time kept fast friendship with my fathers, thou hast increased the friendship. Now, therefore, that thou and I are friends thou hast made it ten times closer than with my father. May the gods cause our friendship to prosper! May Teshup, the lord, and Amon ordain it eternally as it now is! I write this to my brother that he may show me even more love than he showed my father. Now I ask gold from my brother, and it behoves me to ask this gold for two causes: in the first place for war equipment (to be provided later), and secondly, for the dowry (likewise to be provided). So, then, let my brother send me much gold, without measure, more than to my father. For in my brother's land gold is as the dust of the earth. May the gods grant that in the land of my brother, where already so much gold is, there may be ten times more in times to come! Certainly the gold that I require will not trouble my brother's heart, but let him also not grieve my heart. Therefore let my brother send gold without measure, in great quantity. And I also will grant all the gifts that my brother asks. For this land is my brother's land, and this my house is his house."

All Tushratta's letters are written in this tone with the exception of the last. Nimmuria felt his end approaching, and entreated the aid of "Our Lady of Nineveh." Such an expedient was not foreign to Egyptian thought. A late inscription professes to tell how a certain divine image was sent from Thebes to a distant land for the healing

of a foreign princess. From Tushratta's answer also it appears that the statue of the goddess Ishtar had once before been taken from Nineveh to Thebes.

This letter begins solemnly:

"The words of Ishtar of Nineveh, mistress of all lands. 'To Egypt, to the land that I love will I go, and there will I sojourn.' Now I send her and she goes. Let my brother worship her and then let her go in gladness that she may return. May Ishtar protect my brother and me for a hundred thousand years. May she grant unto us both great gladness; may we know nothing but happiness."

All this notwithstanding, Nimmuria must die, and later Tushratta describes his own grief on the occasion:

"And on that day I wept, I sat in sorrow. Food and drink I touched not on that day; grieved was my heart. I said, 'Oh, that it had been I who died!'"

When he wrote thus the feelings expressed were probably genuine, for times had changed sadly for him and men of his type.

We have now come to the accession of the reforming king Napkhuria — *i.e.*, Akhenaten. This zealot succeeded in bringing into the foreign relations of Egypt some of the unrest caused by his measures in home politics. To begin with, he sought for new political alliances and sacrificed those already existing, not by breaking off the connections, but by turning a deaf ear to

requests, or by adopting an insolent tone in his answers. On one occasion he showered on the old beggar Tushratta derision which was no doubt well deserved, but which it was most impolitic to express so plainly. He gives one the impression of an inexperienced prince, brought up in Oriental seclusion, who persists at all hazards in playing the part of a shrewd and worldly-wise ruler. He strained after novelty at the expense of his own security, and attempted to demonstrate the strength of the supports of his throne by sawing them through.

About the time of Nimmuria's death Kadashman-Bel of Babylonia also died, and Burnaburiash, probably his brother or cousin, was prepared on his accession to maintain the traditional friendship with Egypt. But at the very beginning Napkhuria was guilty of a breach of etiquette in neglecting to send any expression of sympathy during a long illness of Burnaburiash. In spite of many fine words, the usual matrimonial negotiations did not run smoothly; moreover, attacks were made on travelling messengers, and at length Napkhuria's avarice forced the Babylonian to measures of retaliation, and he writes:

"Since ambassadors from thy fathers came to my fathers, they also have lived on friendly terms. We should continue in the same. Messengers have now come from thee thrice, but thou hast sent with them

no gift worthy the name. I also shall desist in the same way. If nothing is denied me I shall deny thee nothing."

Meanwhile, the dear brother in Egypt was continually finding opportunities to annoy the Babylonian. Assyria was then a small state on the middle Tigris, in exactly the same relation to the suzerainty of Babylonia as Canaan was to that of Egypt. Disregarding this fact, Napkhuria sent a very large quantity of gold to the prince Assurnadinakhi and ostentatiously received an Assyrian embassy. Burnaburiash, in remonstrating, referred to the loyal conduct of his father, Kurigalzu, who had answered the Canaanites with threats when, in an attempted rising against Nimmuria, they offered to do homage to Kurigalzu.

"Now there are the Assyrians, my vassals. Have not I already written to thee in regard to them? If thou lovest me they will gain nothing from thee. Let them depart unsuccessful."

This exhortation seems to have been vain, for a letter of the next Assyrian king, Assuruballit, speaks of a regular exchange of messengers, and indicates that the Sutu of the desert—doubtless at the instigation of the Babylonians—were about to kill every Egyptian who showed himself in their territory.

A prince of Alashia, who never mentions either

his own name or that of the Egyptian king, wrote short letters, for the most part of a business character. Alashia probably lay on the Cilician coast. Gold did not tempt him; he asked modestly for silver in return for copper, for oil, textiles and manufactured articles in return for wood for building. Thus the tablets from Alashia are rich in information regarding commercial matters and questions of public rights. They are of special interest for us, owing to the fact that one of them contains the first historic mention of the plague.

"Behold! my brother, I have sent thee five hundred talents of copper as a gift. Let it not grieve my brother's heart that it is too little. For in my land the hand of Nergal (the god of pestilence) has slain all the workers, and copper cannot be produced. And, my brother, take it not to heart that thy messenger stayed three years in my land. For the hand of Nergal is in it, and in my house my young wife died."

Yet this ruler also had to guard himself against embassies unworthy of a king sent by Napkhuria. Another prince, in a letter unfortunately much damaged, made the complaint that Napkhuria had once caused his own name to be written first in a letter. This was, indeed, unparalleled; the title of the recipient stands first even in a severe reprimand sent to the Egyptian vassal Aziru As if

to equalise matters, in royal letters the greetings that follow the address begin with a mention of the welfare of the writer. "It is well with me. May it be well with thee," &c. There is, however, one tablet addressed to Napkhuria that committed the offence complained of, and it was perhaps for this reason that the introductory address was scratched through anciently. It is fairly certain that this letter, as well as the one complaining of Napkhuria's breach of etiquette, came from the Hittite king. The tone throughout is very decided, and complaints of neglect of proper consideration are not wanting.

A short time before his death Nimmuria had married another daughter of Tushratta, Tadukhipa, the long inventory of whose dowry was found at Tell el Amarna. On receiving the news—for which he was already prepared—of the death of his hoary-headed son-in-law, Tushratta at once sent Pirizzi and Bubri "with lamentations" to Napkhuria. He managed to suppress his persona wishes up to the third message, but prepared the way for them by calling Teye, the chief wife of Nimmuria, as a witness. "And all the matters that I negotiated with thy father, Teye, thy mother, knoweth them; none other besides knoweth of them." Immediately after this came the request that Napkhuria should send him the "golden images" (statuettes) that Nimmuria had promised

him. And Napkhuria wasted no words, but sent by the messenger Hamashi—the wooden models! He seems to have thought he was acting as a good son and a shrewd man of business in fulfilling his father's promises at so cheap a rate.

But Tushratta was not easily shaken off. His next move was to send Teye and her son each a letter at the same time. He gave polite greetings from his wife Yuni to the widow, whose influence was evidently still strong, sent her presents, and entreated her intercession. This remarkable letter runs as follows:

"To Teye, Queen of Egypt, Tushratta, King of Mitani. May it be well with thee, may it be well with thy son, may it be well with Tadukhipa, my daughter, thy young companion in widowhood. Thou knowest that I was in friendship with Nimmuria, thy husband, and that Nimmuria was in friendship with me. What I wrote to him and negotiated with him, and likewise what Nimmuria thy husband wrote to me and negotiated with me, thou and Gilia and Mani (Tushratta's messengers), ye know it. But thou knowest it better than all others. And none other knows it. Now thou hast said to Gilia: 'Say to thy lord, Nimmuria my husband was in friendship with thy father and sent him the military standards, which he kept. The embassies between them were never interrupted. But now, forget not thou thine old friendship with thy brother Nimmuria and extend it to his son Napkhuria. Send joyful embassies; let them not be omitted.' Lo, I will not forget the friendship with Nimmuria! More, tenfold more, words of friendship will I ex-

change with Napkhuria thy son and keep up right good friendship. But the promise of Nimmuria, the gift that thy husband ordered to be brought to me, thou hast not sent. I asked for golden statuettes. But now Napkhuria thy son has had them made of wood, though gold is as dust in thy land. Why does this happen just now? Should not Napkhuria deliver that to me which his father gave me? And he wishes to increase our friendship tenfold! Wherefore then dost thou not bring this matter before thy son Napkhuria? Even though thou do it not he ought nevertheless to deliver unto me statuettes of gold and in no way to slight me. Thus friendship will reign between us tenfold. Let thy messengers to Yuni my wife depart with Napkhuria's ambassador, and Yuni's messenger shall come to thee. Lo, I send gifts for thee; boxes filled with good oil (perfume)," &c. &c.

To Napkhuria also Tushratta insists on his rights in detail. The messengers from Mitani were said to have been present at the casting of the images, and even to have started on their journey home when Nimmuria died. It may thus be assumed that Napkhuria at once ordered the transport to be brought back. Queen Teye evidently showed no desire to be mixed up in so unpleasant a business, but Napkhuria demanded that the messenger Gilia should be sent to him.

Most probably this often-mentioned Gilia was the witness present at the casting and despatching of the images. Tushratta gave evasive answers,

and his last letter (more than two hundred lines in length) is something in the nature of an ultimatum. On both sides fresh complaints are brought forward, and the settlement of each one of them was made dependent on the settlement of the principal question. Napkhuria threatened to close his land against all subjects of Mitani, and, as no later document has been found, it is probable that at this point all intercourse ceased. A much mutilated letter from Gebal to Egypt announces the departure of the king of Mitani with an armed force; but it is doubtful whether this can be quoted in the present connection.

The characters of the two irreconcilable monarchs, who show each other up so admirably for our edification, make any question as to which had right on his side seem comparatively trifling. Tushratta was evidently much distressed that he dared not venture to send his Gilia back again and that none of the later letters which he had from Nimmuria contained any word of the golden images. It is evident also that Napkhuria, supported by Teye, had actually recalled embassies that his father had already sent out. The old king, who had called Ishtar of Nineveh to his help, may have been brought by the approach of death into a generous state of mind not uncommon in such cases. Even now we say, "He must be near his end," when a man shows unex-

pected and unusual gentleness. It is quite possible that Nimmuria had ordered the images in question to be made for his worthy friend without giving any formal promise to send them, and that as soon as Tushratta learned what had happened, he promptly interposed with a lie, in hope of appealing to Napkhuria's sense of the fitness of things. That, however, was expecting too much.

IV. Letters from Asiatic Vassals.

Four-fifths of the number of letters consist of reports and communications from Egyptian governors, military commanders, magistrates, and other officials in Western Asia. The form of address from these subordinates to the Pharaoh is naturally very different from "Royal Brother," and in hurried announcements it is often contracted. Written in full the long formula runs:

"To the king, my lord, my gods, my sun, the sun of heaven; Yitia, prefect of Askelon is thy servant, the dust at thy feet, the servant of thy horses. At the feet of the king my lord seven times and again seven times I prostrate myself upon my back and upon my breast."

The importance of these letters, however, consists in the substance of what they report and in

what they tell us as to the doings of the writers. They are the data by reason of which the Tell el Amarna archives constitute a unique store of historical material for the study of the history of civilisation.

Warlike expeditions among the vassal chiefs were the order of the day. Most dangerous of all the chiefs was Aziru, prefect of the land of the Amorites, whose territory included the district north of Damascus and part of the valley of the Orontes. In the hope of founding an independent kingdom, Aziru had swiftly seized on the dominions of all the chiefs on his northern boundary, and in this action his admirable understanding with the Egyptian officials afforded him invaluable help. The town of Tunip sent a truly pathetic letter to Pharaoh from which we learn that Aziru had already taken Nii, was besieging Simyra in Phœnicia, and at the same time, by the aid of his creatures at Court, had succeeded in preventing the king from reinstating a prince of Tunip who had been sent into Egypt as a hostage. This prince, a certain Yadi Addu, had already been released and was on his way home when the allies of Aziru caused him to be recalled.

"If, however, we have to mourn," so the complaint proceeds, "the king himself will soon have to mourn over those things which Aziru has committed against us, for next he will turn his hand against his lord.

But Tunip, thy city, weeps; her tears flow; nowhere is there help for us."

The most bitter complaints against Aziru and his father Abd-Ashera come from Rib-Addi of Gebal. His utterances rival the Lamentations of Jeremiah both in volume and in monotonous pathos. One of these many letters, the contents of which are often stereotyped enough, is also noticeable for its revelation of the connection of Rib-Addi, who must already have been an elderly man, with Amanappa:

"To Amanappa, my father; Rib-Addi, thy son! At my father's feet I fall. Again and again I asked thee, 'Canst thou not rescue me from the hand of Abd-Ashera? All the Habiri are on his side; the princes will hear no remonstrances, but are in alliance with him; thereby is he become mighty.' But thou hast answered me, 'Send thy messenger with me to Court, and then will I, if nothing be said against it (*i.e.*, by the king), send him again and again with royal troops to thee till the Pidati march forth to secure thy life.' Then I answered thee, 'I will not delay to send the man, but nothing of this must come to the ears of Abd-Ashera, for [Yanhamu has] taken [silver] from his hand.' (As much as to say that if Abd-Ashera gives Yanhamu a hint, the messenger will never get beyond Lower Egypt.) But thou hast said, 'Fear not, but send a ship to the Yarimuta, and money and garments will come to thee thence. Now, behold, the troops which thou hast given me have fled, because thou hast neglected me, while I have obeyed thee. He hath spoken with the official

(Yanhamu?) nine times [in vain]. Behold, thou art delaying with regard to this offence as with the others. What then can save me? If I receive no troops I shall forsake my city, and flee, doing that which seems good to me to preserve my life."

Yanhamu's bias against Rib-Addi is made evident in many other letters which the poor wretch addressed to the Court:

"If I should make a treaty with Abd-Ashera as did Yap-Addi and Zimrida, then I should be safe. Furthermore, since Simyra is indeed lost to me, and Yanhamu hath received Bit-Arti, he ought to send me provision of grain that I may defend the king's city for him. Thou, oh king, speak to Yanhamu; 'Behold, Rib-Addi is in thy hand, and all injury done to him falls on thee.'"

This desire was not complied with, for the Phœnician vassal was at length robbed of all his cities and possessions, so that even the callous Egyptian Government felt obliged at last to send a threatening embassy to Aziru, the son of Abd-Ashera, and the real author of the difficulties in Gebal. At the same time the surrender was demanded of certain "enemies of the king," who were in all probability principal adherents of Aziru. When the messenger Hani arrived with this note, Aziru, evidently warned in good time, had promptly vanished over the hills, and none of the royal commands could be carried out. He

pretends to have settled down in Tunip, which he must previously have seized, but at once returned home on hearing of Hani's arrival. Unfortunately it was too late. The cunning Amorite brought forward one excuse after another. "Even if thy actions be just, yet if thou dissemble in thy letters at thy pleasure, the king must at length come to think that thou liest in every case," is a passage in the letter brought by Hani. Aziru replies in a tone of injured innocence:

"To the great king, my lord, my god, my sun; Aziru, thy servant. Seven times and again seven times, &c. Oh, lord, I am indeed thy servant; and only when prostrate on the ground before the king, my lord, can I speak what I have to say. But hearken not, O lord, to the foes who slander me before thee. I remain thy servant for ever."

This trusty vassal added to his other known faults the peculiarity of conspiring readily with the Hittite foes of the Court. His insolence helped him successfully out of these awkward difficulties also whenever the matter came under discussion. When preparing fresh raids he did not hesitate to invent news of Hittite invasions which he was bound to resist, and all territory which he then took from his co-vassals would, according to his own account, otherwise certainly have fallen into the hands of the enemy. But as the result was always the same—*i.e.*, to the

advantage of Aziru alone—the opinion began to prevail in Egyptian councils that this restless vassal should be summoned to Court and tried. For many years Aziru succeeded in evading these fatal and dangerous, or at best very costly orders. But finally he was forced to obey, and with heavy heart and well-filled treasure chests set off for Egypt. Apparently he relied on his principal ally Dudu, whom in his letters he always addresses as "father"; but this pleasant alliance did not avail to protect the disturber of the peace from provisional arrest. The last letter in the Aziru series, which had obviously been confiscated and subsequently found its way back into the archives, is a letter of condolence from the adherents or sons of Aziru to their imprisoned chief. Nevertheless, the political activity of the Amorite chief seemed to many Syrian, and especially to Phœnician princes as on the whole for the good of the land, and, therefore, to be supported. His appearance put the longed-for end to a far less endurable condition of things. Two communications from Akizzi, the headman of the city of Katna, near Damascus, exhibit the difference clearly. When Akizzi sent his first communication to Nimmuria every petty chief went raiding on his own account: Teuwatta of Lapana, Dasha, Arzawia and all the rest of them. These vanished with the entrance of Aziru upon

the scene, though the change was by no means welcome to Akizzi. In the Lebanon things were no better. Here Namyauza was struggling with the headmen of Puzruna and Khalunni. "They began hostilities together with Biridashwi against me and said: 'Come, let us kill Namyauza.' But I escaped." This promiscuous warfare raged most fiercely in the south. Here a certain Labaya tried to play the part taken by Aziru in the north. But fortune was less favourable to Labaya. Probably he failed to induce his undisciplined officers to act in unison, and the unhappy man's sole achievement seems to have been the welding of his foes into a compact body against himself. He lost his territory, kept up the struggle a little longer as a freebooter, was taken captive at Megiddo, escaped again on the eve of being shipped to Egypt, and fell in battle or died a natural death after at length meeting apparently with some success in Judæa.

Jerusalem was under a royal "Uweu," a term perhaps best rendered "captain," named Abdikheba. A neighbouring prefect, Shuwardata, asserted occasionally that he had entered into conspiracies with Labaya, and Abdikheba in fact complained of hostilities on all sides. Milki-El and his father-in-law Tagi, chiefs in the Philistian plain near Gath, were his principal opponents. They recruited troops from among the Habiri in

the hope that Abdikheba, finding himself practically blockaded, would weary of the struggle and abandon the field. He was evidently very nearly driven to this when he wrote:

"Infamous things have been wrought against me. To see it would draw tears from the eyes of the king, so do my foes press me. Shall the royal cities fall a prey to the Habiri? If the Pidati do not come in the course of this year, let the king send messengers to fetch me and all my brethren that we may die in the presence of the king, our lord."

By the Habiri we must here understand no other than the Hebrews, who were therefore already to be found in the "Promised Land," but had not yet firmly established themselves there. They swarmed in the Lebanon, where Namyauza had formally enlisted one of their hordes; and yet it seems as if they already held Shechem and Mount Ephraim as free tribal property. At any rate, no letter thence to the king has been discovered, although there is one mention of the city Shakmi (Shechem). The genuinely ancient passages in the scriptural accounts of the conquest in the Book of Joshua, and still more the valuable fragments in the first chapter of Judges, are fairly in accordance with what we here learn from the tablets.

Abdikheba's letters may be considered along with those of Milki-El and Tagi, of whom Yan-

hamu, the powerful official, had just made an example. Their voices take up the chorus of complaint:

ABDIKHEBA. "Lo! Milki-El and Tagi have done as follows. . . . Thus, as the king liveth, hath Milki-El committed treachery against me. Send Yanhamu that he may see what is done in the king's land."

MILKI-EL. "The king, my lord, shall know the deed done by Yanhamu after I had been dismissed by the king. Lo, he took three thousand talents from me and said to me, 'Give me thy wife and thy sons that I may slay them.' May my lord, the king, remember this deed and send us chariots to bring us away."

TAGI. "Am I not a servant of the king? But my brother is full of wounds so that I can send no message by him to the king. Ask the *rabisu* (a title of Yanhamu) whether my brother is not full of wounds. But we turn our eyes to thee, to know whether we may rise to heaven or creep into the earth; our heads remain in thy hand. Behold, I shall try to make my way to the king by the hand of the surgeons."

MILKI-EL. "I have received the king's message. Let him send the Pidati to protect his servant, and grains of myrrh gum for healing."

As already pointed out, the blame for such occurrences belongs in the first place to the Egyptian system of government. How little the petty princes could expect, whether of good or evil, from their suzerain is shown by glaring examples. King Burnaburiash complained that

a Babylonian trading company established by his ambassador in the Canaanite city of Khinaton had, immediately after the ambassador's departure, been attacked and utterly plundered. The principals were killed, and the rest—some of them mutilated—were sent into slavery. "Canaan is thy land; thou art king of it," continues Burnaburiash. "It was in thy land that I suffered this injury; therefore restrain the doers of it. Replace the stolen gold, and slay the murderers of my subjects to avenge their blood." Whether this was done was extremely doubtful, for part of the plunder had in all probability already sufficed to secure a safe retreat for the brigands, who, furthermore, were officials from some of whom letters have been found. The natural consequence was that the ambassadors themselves were attacked. Their caravan with gifts for Napkhuria was robbed twice in succession, and they themselves were held to ransom. The Egyptian Government nevertheless remained outrageously slack as ever, as we may see from the following safe conduct granted on behalf of the Canaanite miscreants: "To the princes in the land of Canaan, the vassals of my brother. Akiya, my messenger, I send to the King of Egypt my brother. Bring him safe and quickly to Egypt. Let no violence befall him."

Prefects of Canaanite ports were naturally in

most active communication with Egypt. On some of the shrewder minds among these men it had dawned that it pleased and amused the king to have immediate news of messages by sea and land from far and near communicated in their letters. Abi-milki of Tyre had carried this practice farthest, and he was also admirably skilful in lodging complaints by the way. We owe to this worthy one of the choicest pieces in the whole collection, the elegant pæan of a place-hunter of more than three thousand years ago. It will be noticed that some of his rhetorical expressions repeatedly recall those of the Hebrew Psalter in the same way as do phrases in the letter of Tagi already quoted. In fact, the Bible critic has much to learn from the tablets as a whole. After the formal beginning, Abi-milki launches out as follows:

"My lord the king is the Sun-God, rising each day over the earth according to the will of his gracious father, the heavenly Sun-God (Aten). His words give life and prosperity. To all lands his might giveth peace. Like the (Phœnician) god Ramman, so he thunders down from heaven, and the earth trembles before him. Behold, thy servant writeth as soon as he has good news to send the king. And the fear of my lord, the king, fell upon the whole land till the messenger made known the good news from the king my lord. When I heard through him the command of the king to me, 'Be at the disposal of my high officials,' then thy servant

answered his lord, 'It is already done.' On my breast and on my back write I down for myself the commands of the king. Verily, he who hearkeneth to the king his lord, and serveth him with love, the Sun-God riseth over him, and a good word from the mouth of his lord giveth him life. If he heed not the commands of his lord his city will fall, his house will perish, and his name will be known no more for ever in all lands. But he who followeth his lord as a faithful servant, his city is prosperous, his house is secure, and his name shall endure for ever."

The letter continues for some time in the same strain, but at the end the courtier bethinks him of his office of informer, and adds hastily:

"Furthermore, Zimrida, the prefect of Sidon, sends a report every day to Aziru, Abd-Ashera's son. Every word that comes from Egypt he telleth to him. I, however, tell it to my lord, that it may serve thee, oh my lord!"

Two princes, Adad-nirari of Nukhashi and another whose name is now illegible, apparently take a higher rank than their neighbours. Nukhashi is often named in these tablets as well as in Egyptian inscriptions, and it must have been situated on the north-east slope of the Lebanon range. We have also letters from the towns of Biruta (Beyrout), Hashab, Hazi, Kumidi, Kadesh on the Orontes, Sidon, Akko, Ruhiza, Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, Gaza, Lachish, Shamhuna, Mushihuma, Dubu, and others, while there are many more so

mutilated that their origin can no longer be determined.

These letters, though by no means all of them containing important contributions to the history of political intrigue, are often of interest from the light they throw on manners and customs. A few further extracts are therefore given here.

"To the king my lord, my gods, my sun; Yabitiri is thy servant, the dust of thy feet, &c. And a faithful servant of the king am I. I look hither, and I look thither, but it is not light; then I look to the king my lord, then there is light. A brick may be removed from its firm bed, but I move not away from the king's feet. Let my lord the king ask Yanhamu, his *rabisu*. While I was still young he brought me to Egypt, and I served my lord the king and stood at the gate of the palace (as page). And to-day, let my lord the king ask his *rabisu*, I guard the gates of Gaza and of Joppa. I am also attached to the Pidati of my lord the king; whither they go thither do I go with them, as even now. On my neck rests the yoke of my lord the king, and I bear it."

The following tablet from the neighbourhood of the Jordan promises good results as the reward of future research for geographical details:

"To Yanhamu, my lord: Mut-Addi is thy servant at thy feet. I told thee before, and it is so indeed; Ayab hath fled in secret, as did also previously the king of Bihishi before the commissioners of the king his lord. Is Ayab now in Bihishi? [He is there] truly as the lord king liveth, truly as he liveth. For

two months he has been there. Behold, Benenima is present, Tadua is present, Yashua is present; ask them whether he hath fled from Shadi-Marduk, from Astarti. When all the cities in the land of Gari were in rebellion, Adma (Udumu), Aduri, Araru, Mishtu, Migdal, Ain-anab and Sarki were taken, then later Hawani and Yabesh. Behold, moreover, as soon as thou hadst written a letter to me I wrote to him (Ayab) that thou hadst returned from thy journey (to Palestine?) And behold he came to Bihishi and heard the command."

The names Ayab and Yashua recall Job and Joshua to our minds.

The great alacrity shown in this letter was, as we already know, most acceptable to Yanhamu. Another Syrian chief, whose name has been obliterated, complained bitterly that Yanhamu had refused him a passage through his territories, although he showed the royal summons to Court. This, indeed, may have been an indirect favour to his correspondent. Very amusing is a group of three synoptic letters, written by one scribe for Biri . . . . (the name is imperfect) of Hashab, Ildaya . . . . of Hazi, and another. These vassals had evidently taken the field together. They recite their tale like a chorus of schoolboys repeating a lesson.

"Behold, we were besieging the cities of the king my lord in the land of Amki (*i.e.*, cities that had fallen away and had ceased to pay tribute). Then

came Itakama, the Prince of Kinza (Kadesh), at the head of Hittites. Let my lord the king write to Itakama, and cause him to turn aside and give us troops that we may win the cities of my lord the king, and thenceforth dwell in them."

Itakama was specially unpopular with his neighbours. Apparently he was one of the more powerful allies of Aziru, and as such his special task was to press as hard as possible on the foes of the Amorites in southern Cœle-Syria. Perhaps, however, Aziru and Itakama did not come together till each for a time had fought his battles alone. The Hittites in Itakama's force were, of course, prominently mentioned to alarm Pharaoh. They may have been Hittite spearmen enrolled by the prince of Kadesh, much as the Habiri and Sutu had been enlisted by his chief rival Namyauza. It is even possible that the soldiers of Kadesh had always been armed in Hittite fashion; perhaps the town was already inhabited by people of Hittite stock. Later the Hittites actually seized Kadesh, and it is questionable whether it was for the first time. Itakama himself, however, scouts any thought of defection; nay, he writes:

"To the king my lord, &c. I am thy servant, but Namyauza hath slandered me to thee, oh my master. And while he was doing that he occupied all the inheritance of my fathers in the land of Kadesh, and my villages hath he set on fire. Do not

the officers of my lord the king and his subjects know my faithfulness? I serve thee with all my brethren, and where there is rebellion against my lord the king, thither I march with my warriors, my chariots, and all my brethren. Behold, now Namyauza hath delivered up to the Habiri all the king's cities in the land of Kadesh and in Ube. But I will march forth, and if thy gods and thy sun go before me I will restore these places from the Habiri to the king that I may show myself subject to him. I will drive out these Habiri, and my lord the king shall rejoice in his servant Itakama. I will serve the king my lord, and all my brethren, and all lands shall serve him. But Namyauza will I destroy, for I am for ever a servant of the king my lord."

The land of Ube here named corresponds to the Hobah of the Bible, mentioned in Genesis xiv. 15, as the place to which Abram pursued the conquerors of Sodom, who had carried Lot away. According to the margin of the Revised Version, Hobah lay "north of Damascus." In a letter from Akizzi of Katna (see p. 44), we read, however, "Oh, my lord the king, as Damascus in the land of Ube stretches out her hand to thy feet, so Katna stretches out her hand to thy feet." The statements may be reconciled by the hypothesis that in the Old Testament the position of the town after which the district is named is more exactly indicated. Other lands named in the tablets are more difficult to identify. To mitigate a famine in Gebal, Rib-Addi intended to send for grain from

Zalukhi in Ugarit, but his enemies detained his ships and frustrated his intentions. Zalukhi does not seem to be mentioned again, and Rib-Addi in a later letter compares Ugarit with the region round Tyre as regards its administrative relation to Egypt. Abi-milki, the Tyrian prefect, once informs the king, "Fire hath devoured the city of Ugarit; one half of it hath it destroyed and not the other." Finally, a certain Yapakhi-Addi, after an unsuccessful attempt to get provisions into Rib-Addi's city Simyra, reproachfully informs Yanhamu that Aziru has extended his dominions from Gebal to Ugarit. Ugarit must thus have been the most northerly of the Egyptian possessions in Asia, and therefore not far from the site of the modern Alexandretta. This outlying position made the little state a somewhat insecure jewel in the crown of Egypt. King Kadashman-Bel seems to have been of this opinion when (see p. 27) he included in his little list of ladies impossible for a royal harem "a maiden from Ugarit." Evidently he meant to enumerate superciliously petty foreign "princesses" only.

Of a certain land of Danuna (considered a part of Canaan) we learn further that its king died, and that his brother succeeded to the throne unopposed. One of the two may be identical with the king of Tana; who, as Rib-Addi briefly mentions, was about to march to Gebal,

but was forced by scarcity of water to return home.

A few letters from women are among the tablets. Two probably came from the wife of Milki-El, who was hard pressed by the Habiri when her husband was called to Egypt. Two others are addressed, "The handmaid to my mistress"; perhaps they were sent along with Tushratta's letters to his daughter in Egypt and were from one of her playfellows or relatives. Finally, the daughter of Napkhuria, married to Burnaburiash, sent a small tablet to her father by a special envoy named Kidin-Ramman. "Before the face of my lord let him come" indicates that the letter was "to be delivered in person." It is a pity that this dainty little letter is for the most part illegible.

V. Political Conditions in the Tell el Amarna Period.

However favourably the religious reform of King Napkhuria may be estimated on its own merits, it by no means strengthened the authority of Egypt in Asia. Of course it could have in no way been the cause of the state of affairs in Syria and Canaan; perhaps Amenophis III., whatever his own great slackness, simply inherited the

confusion in this part of his empire. The heaviest blows could not in the long run prevent the Habiri from returning to the attack again and again at brief intervals. Their need of expansion was greater than their fear, and, after all, it mattered little to Pharaoh whether the Habirite or the Canaanite paid tribute in Palestine as soon as the intruder was prepared to acknowledge his rights. Napkhuria's great weakness was his obvious partiality for those of his officials who had become Aten worshippers, and the eagerness of these men to exploit the royal favour was in proportion to their disbelief in the permanence of the movement for reform.

In their Babylonian form the Tell el Amarna tablets are in the first place the product of the diplomatic custom of the time, but in many details of their contents they show that the civilisation of Western Asia had for centuries been based on a Babylonian foundation. With the lack of exact information so frequently to be deplored in Egyptian accounts, the wordy narratives of the campaigns of Thutmosis III. scarcely enable us to determine exactly from which of the greater powers he had succeeded in wresting districts of Syria and Palestine. As regards the political situation there, even at the beginning of the Kassite Dynasty—a change probably attended by long internecine struggles—Babylonia seems

to have lost its western possessions on the Mediterranean, and we may rather suppose that it was the kings of Mitani who ruled these territories in the time of Thutmosis III.

Mitani, though still an extensive power, had seen its best days at any rate when Tushratta with difficulty ascended the throne of his fathers. The name "Hanirabbat" by which it was known to all its neighbours, must be the older name, and also that of the original province to which later acquisitions had been united. It is an established fact that Eastern Cappadocia, the mountainous province of Melitene on the Upper Euphrates, was still known as Hanirabbat about 690 B.C., and that, on the other hand, Mitani, in the narrower sense of the term, must have corresponded to the later Macedonian province of Mygdonia, *i.e.*, Mesopotamia proper. We have seen, however, that Ninua, afterwards the Assyrian capital Nineveh, was part of the dominion of Tushratta, otherwise he could hardly have sent Ishtar, the goddess of that city, to Egypt. The subsequent capital of Assyria may have been the most easterly possession of the kingdom of Hanirabbat-Mitani, the centre of gravity of which lay farther westward. In the letters there is a remark of the king of Alashia recommending Pharaoh to exchange no more gifts with "the kings of the Hittites and of Shankhar." Mitani is, perhaps, here named

Shankhar from its dependencies in Asia Minor, or we may suppose it to have been the name of Tushratta's residence.

In contrast to the Hittite empire, which was pressing forward from the neck of Asia Minor through the passes of Issus into Syria, and was rapidly increasing in power, Mitani stood on the eve of its fall. Babylonians and Hittites were alike watching to pluck the ripe fruit, and perhaps it lacked little to decide Tushratta, instead of fighting once more for the crown, to capitulate to the invading Hittites and see the end of the kingdom of Mitani. The great "love" of this king for Egypt was not, therefore, called forth merely by the glitter of gold, but also by dire political necessity. The catastrophe occurred some few decades after the correspondence comes to an end for us. Mitani vanished from the states of Western Asia and gave place to small Aramaic kingdoms, while the eastern boundary, together with Ninua, was seized by Assyria as the first step to her subsequent suzerainty in the East.

But still more swiftly overtaken of fate was the XVIIIth Dynasty in Egypt. Napkhuria did not even see the completion of his city at Tell el Amarna, for he died in 1370 B.C. His reform followed him, and the victorious champions of Amon could raze to the ground the hated City

of the Sun's Disk. They must already have been on the march when in a happy moment it occurred to a keeper of the royal archives to conceal the clay tablets in the earth and thus save them for remote posterity.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

THE best translation of the Tell el Amarna tablets available for English readers is that from the German of H. Winckler, published by Luzac, London, 1896.

Professor Flinders Petrie's *Syria and Egypt from the Tell el Amarna Letters* (Methuen, 1898) is a synopsis of the letters as far as they belong to the relations of Egypt and Syria, with the addition of geographical and historical notes. In the Introduction Professor Petrie gives a harrowing account of the casual way in which the tablets were found and of the criminal carelessness with which these priceless records were subsequently handled.

Some years afterwards, in 1891–2, Professor Petrie himself excavated what was left of the ruins of the royal city of Amenhetep IV. An account of his discoveries on that site and of his deductions from them may be found in his finely illustrated memoir *Tell el Amarna* (Methuen, 1894). He particularly emphasises the skill and originality displayed in the remains of the arts and crafts of the Tell el Amarna period, and emphatically points out the evidence of active connection between Egypt and Ægean

(Mykenæan) civilisation at that time. His appreciation of the character of Akhenaten differs considerably from that formed by the author of the present pamphlet, and should be compared with it. In vol. ii. p. 205 *et seqq.* of his *History of Egypt*, Professor Petrie maintains the same views. The same volume also contains his earlier synopsis of the Tell el Amarna tablets.

Professor Maspero's account of the historical bearing of these tablets is worked into the second volume of his great *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient*, which is entitled *Les Premières Mêlées des Peuples*. A translation of that work has been issued by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, but in any parts relating to Biblical history the student will do well to consult the original.

The bearings of the tablets on Biblical history, and particularly the evidence they have supplied as to the early date at which the art of writing was practised in Syria and Palestine, have been favourite themes of Professor Sayce. His arguments and conclusions on these points may be found in *The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments* (S.P.C.K. 1894); *Patriarchal Palestine* (S.P.C.K. 1895); *The Egypt of the Hebrews and Herodotus* (Rivington, Percival & Co., 1896), and elsewhere.

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